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ABSTRACT

An individual folk anthology unit covering eight topics is described in this paper. The eight topics include (1) I have an identity, (2) my interesting name, (3) mandalas and sentences, (4) rhythms and rhymes of old times, (5) myths of my childhood, (6) folk legends/old and new, (7) aspects of folklore, and (8) slang. The activities accompanying each topic are designed to motivate high school students toward writing and to become fluent writers. Procedures for relating each topic to writing are included. (HOD)

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INDIVIDUAL FOLK ANTHOLOGY

Jean L. Griffin

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CS 208908

INDIVIDUAL FOLK ANTHOLOGY

This unit covered eight topics related to the student's life experiences or personal history.:

I Have an Identity	Myths of My Childhood
My Interesting Name	Folk Legends/ Old and New
Mandalas and Sentences	Aspects of Folklore
Phytnms & Rhymes of Old Times	Slang

My goals were that I wanted the students to be motivated toward writing, and to become fluent writers. I wanted them to feel comfortable writing about topics of interest to them; to know more about themselves and each other; to experience their uniqueness as a link in the chain of family generations, and I wanted to know and understand them as individuals.

* * * * *

I Have An Identity

Procedure:

Take a grocery bag and paste magazine pictures on the outside that depict your interests. Inside the bag, place items that illustrate additional information about you. During the last few minutes (ten) of class one day, share this. I told my students that I had done my homework the previous night and that I wanted to share it with them. Afterward, I told them that they were to do theirs that night so we could begin presentations the following day. Students did their presentations at a table in front of the class. This took three or four days. Next, students wrote paragraphs about themselves using the information they had shared with the class.

What I Learned:

The presentations took longer than I had expected because some students did not have access to magazines in their home. Three or four students in each class failed to do the presentation. Later when students wrote "I Now Know" in their process journals, many wrote that they knew they could get up in front of the class to talk; that they knew more about their classmates, and that they expected to enjoy the class. This assignment was done the second week of school which was an excellent get-acquainted activity.

* * * * *

My Interesting Name

Procedure:

Discuss the relationship between our names and our identity; the connotation of certain names, and the naming process. For homework, students interview their parents or guardians to find out who named them, who they were named for, and the reason for that particular arrangement of first and middle name. Next, students looked up the meaning of their names in books I had in class. Then we brainstormed and clustered categories on the board.

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Please see attached sheet for copy of clustering] For homework I asked them to write a first draft about their names using the data they had compiled. I also asked them to include any interesting experiences they had incurred with their names, either at school or elsewhere, and to mention whether or not they had ever wanted to change their names, and if so, to what?

What I Learned:

I was truly amazed. I had twenty "Fame and Glory's" from ninety students on the second writing assignment of the year. Students enjoyed learning both the history of their names and the naming process from their parents. Some even felt more important through association with a famous person's name.

* * * * *

Mandalas and Sentences

Procedure:

I merely followed the procedure as outlined by Fran Clagett of the Bay Area Writing Project. Students did the category assignment on the first day, the art work and sentences on two other days. We did not do the follow-up sentences where the students tell why they chose what they did in each category. [See 2nd attached sheet for directions as presented by Vicki Clifford, P.K. Yonge, Gainesville, Fla.] These are the steps I followed.

* * * * *

Rhythms and Rhymes of Old Times

Procedure:

This assignment gave students another opportunity to interview their parents, grandparents or guardians. They were instructed to find out what rhyming games their parents had played as children. They were also told to list the ones they had played when they were younger. Games we mentioned in class were counting games, hop-scotch, tag, and jump rope. After they gathered the information and before the writing, students shared some of their examples in groups which sparked the memories of others. Then they wrote their papers.

What I Learned

Students were surprised to learn that their parents had played some of the same games and knew the same rhymes that they had played. Some students from different parts of the country shared different lyrics to the same game. One student said his mother wanted to know why we were discussing games in English class.

Myths Of My Childhood

Procedure:

We brainstormed customs celebrated in early childhood, and I clustered four myths from their childhoods using their in-put. These were, Santa Claus, The Easter Bunny, The Tooth Fairy and The Boogey Man. Next, I showed students how they could use the information in each of the four clusters as the basis of four body paragraphs. They described the way the myth, or custom was celebrated or observed by their family. This assignment took several days to complete the first drafts.

What I Learned:

Clustering this assignment on the board was a mistake due to the sameness of the papers. I think the students' imaginations were limited to the categories or examples they saw on the board. On the brighter side, students were surprised to see that they could write such long papers, that they had so much to say.

* * * * *

Folk Legends / Old and New

Procedure:

First, I read some examples from Liz Simmons' hand-out on stories. We discussed, "Bloody Mary", "The Claw", ghost stories that were told at camp and slumber parties and favorite family stories. We also discussed the reasons some of these stories were told. For example, some camp stories are designed to keep the kids from wandering off. The homework assignment was to find additional legends or stories from their families. After the first draft was completed, students shared their work in groups and got feedback from one another.

What I Learned:

This topic quickly captivated students' interest. Discussion went on and on. Some students wrote about unique family experiences that were supernatural in nature. Some students, who had not gone to camp, made up stories.

* * * * *

Aspects Of Folklore

Procedure:

We brainstormed, clustered and mapped examples of folk medicine, proverbs, superstitions and similes. The homework assignment was to interview parents,

neighbors and any older person the students knew to gather data on these aspects of folklore. They were also to find out the purposes of the sayings; when they were told and by whom; if the superstition was to bring good luck or to avoid bad luck; and to find out what the remedies were supposed to cure, and how they were administered. After collecting the data, the students wrote their papers in class.

WHAT I Learned:

Students need a couple of days at least to gather this information. When I next do this assignment, I will offer the option of doing greater investigation in one area that the student finds most interesting.

* * * * *

Slang

Procedure:

This assignment was to compile a slang dictionary of words and expressions currently being used by teenagers. Students did this work in class. They worked in groups of four or five with one student in each group acting as the secretary. After each group compiled their list, the secretaries gathered into a group the following day to compile a class list. I then compiled a list from the four classes. Students were cautioned to use only words and expressions they would want their parents to see or hear.

What I Learned:

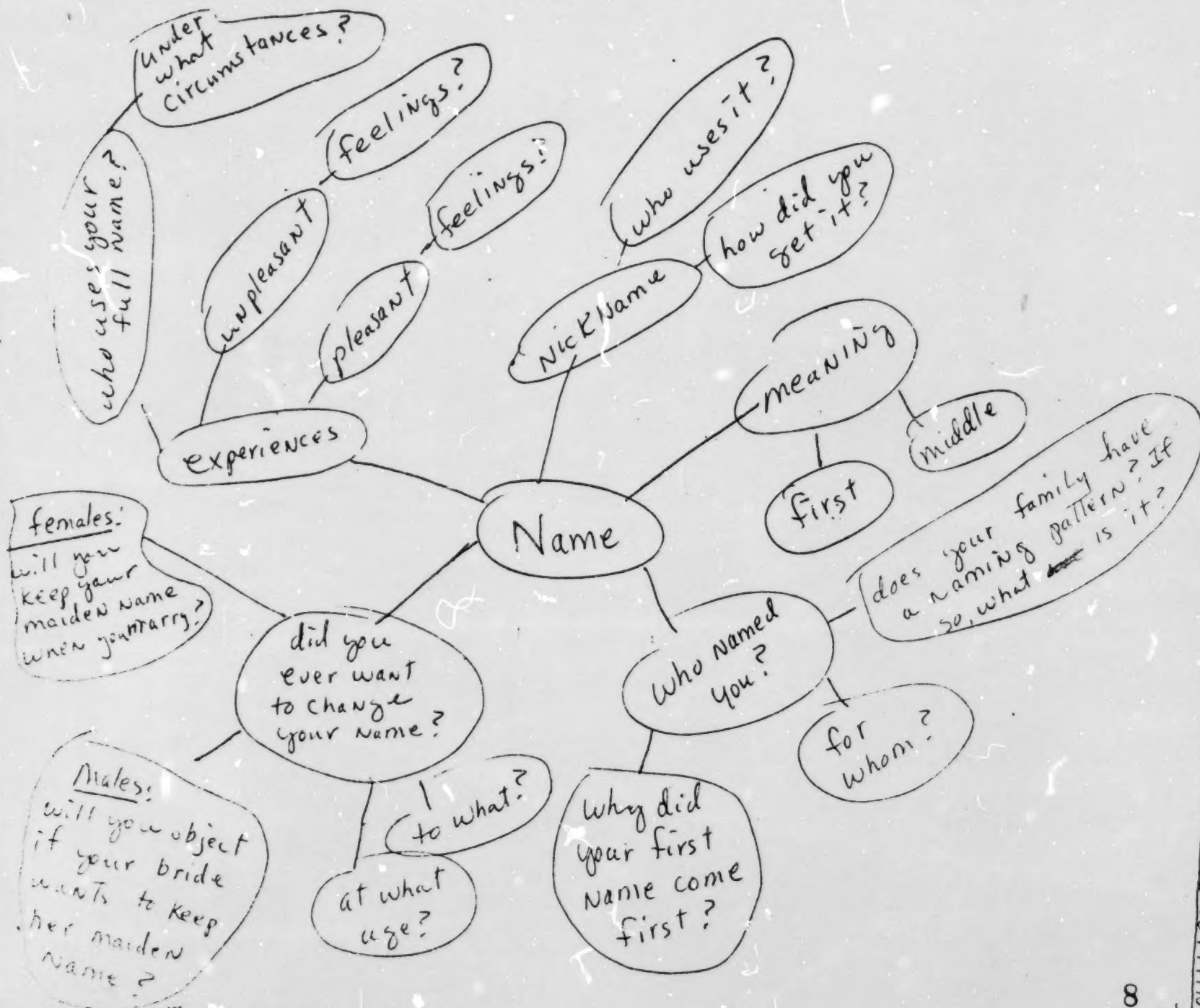
I discovered that slang is so much a part of many students' vocabulary they are unaware when it creeps into their writing. It was interesting to note the difference between Black students' lists and that of the typical red-neck student. (by their own admission) This was by far the best group activity the students participated in during the nine week period.

* * * * *

I highly recommend this unit as a beginning work both to get acquainted with one another and to motivate your students toward free, fluent writing. It also enables the students to discover how much they have in common with each other. With each assignment, I suggested that the students end their paper with a personal comment about the topic. Often a student would say how much he or she had enjoyed discussing the topic with their parents or grandparents.

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Folklore of Naming Practices / Prewriting



MANDALA, a movement in metaphor

Mandala is a Sanscrit word for center, and is usually a circular design with a highly defined center using complex symbolic patterns within four (or more, or none) delineated segments. Each segment represents a range of personally oriented psychological functions or states of mind. Carl Gustave Jung considered the mandala to be the archetypal symbol for the unification of the four aspects of human experience, sensation, feeling, intellect, and intuition. Fran Claggett says her inspiration for the mandala in the classroom grew out of the old school game "What animal are you most like?" The sun image characteristics represent the right hemisphere aspects of the outward or public self and are generally positive or admired associations. The shadow characteristics represent the right hemisphere aspects of the inward or private; choices are not necessarily negative or opposite of the sun characteristics, but are actually more reflective or shadowy, lesser known perhaps. (Students have told me in the past that they tend to identify more strongly with their shadow choices.)

I spend an entire week on the Mandala with an extra weekend thrown in if needed. The week is a structured series of activities which keeps everyone active and interested.

Day 1- fill out the Mandala worksheet (be supportive and patient)

Day 2- ask students to construct sentences explaining their paired choices (image and its quality)

I admire the quality of _____ in a _____ because _____.

I identify with the quality of _____ in a _____ less because _____.

(work closely with their word pairs- noun/adj., must be complementary)

Days 3-4- make the mandala itself; encourage cooperation & helping

Day 5- make the 2 "story" sentences (grammatically correct) and arrange around mandala

Weekend- have students focus on an aspect of one of their sentences and make up a story to go with it- fantastic efforts develop!
(I will spend more time on revision if kids still excited- they will generally work well because of the personal value.)

SUN-SHADOW MANDALA

The Mandala Chart:

CATEGORY	SUN IMAGE	QUALITY	SHADOW IMAGE	QUALITY
ANIMAL				
PLANT				
COLOR				
MINERAL/ GEM				
SHAPE				
NUMBER				
MYSTICAL/ FANTASTIC				

Students must fill out the chart and understand that the Sun Image and its quality work together as a pair, much like the complement between adjective and noun. (The Mandala exercise is a great exercise to discuss the power and fun of playing with words.)

Choices will not always appear to have personal significance for the student, yet the effort must be made to show how choice itself is inherently reflective and individual.

The Mandala:

Draw a large circle on a sheet of paper, colored if desired.

Arrange all the Sun and Shadow Images (14) within the circle by drawing them or representing them symbolically. Many students want to divide the groups, Sun (positive/public) and its Shadow (reflective/private/negative).

Now, make two sentences, one using all the sun images and qualities (14 words), the other using all the shadow images and qualities.

Arrange the two sentences (run-ons, but creative and grammatically correct) around the outside of the Mandala.